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Collapse of a Co-operation: the Chinese View of the Sino-American Relations under the Presidency of Elder Bush

Abstract

The Sino-American relations underwent some crucial changes during the presidency of George Herbert Walker Bush (January 20 1989 – January 20 1993). The newly elected president was greeted as an 'old friend' by the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, who put his belief in making the relationship between the two countries more intense. Still, by the end of the Bush era, trust between the two countries had already got to such a low level that had not been experienced since the normalization of 1972. The aim of the present study is to examine the changes which made the Chinese supervise their foreign policy continuously and re-evaluate the new international situation from the view of the Chinese government.

Keywords: Sino-American relations, Bush, Deng, Tiananmen, Gulf-war, foreign policy, New World Order, Chinese Communist Party

Sino-American relations before the Bush presidency

With the proclamation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) October 1 in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) finished the Chinese Civil War as a winner. The United States of America (USA) was unwilling to acknowledge the CCP as the legitimate leader. The relationship between the two countries worsened due to the Korean War (1950-1953) and they became enemies. However, the considerably deteriorating Sino-Soviet relation in the 1960s encouraged the leaders of the USA to re-think its China-policy. Richard Nixon considered China as a potential partner, who could help to rebalance the Soviet Union. Nixon's historic visit took place between February 21 and 28, 1972. Although the relationship between the two countries was settled *de jure* in 1979 and despite some difficulties it was becoming closer and closer with deepening trust.

With the presidency of George H. W. Bush it seemed the Sino-American relations would improve further since as opposed to the earlier American presidents, he possessed a significant amount of experience about China. Bush, as the head of the United States Liaison Office (USLO), which was the unofficial representative office of the United States between September 26 1974 – January 20 1975¹, and as Vice President had visited China several times contributing to the improvement of the relationship between the two countries, which was especially appreciated by the Chinese leadership and he maintained a personal relationship

¹ About this period see: BUSH, George H. W. & ENGEL, Jeffrey A. (ed): *The China diary of George H. W. Bush: the making of a global president*, Princeton University Press, USA, 2008.

with some important Chinese leaders². The condition of deepening the Sino-American relation was that the efforts of the American government should match the foreign policy plans of the CCP. It was Deng Xiaoping, the paramount leader of the CCP who significantly determined the Chinese foreign policy after Mao Zedong's death.

Deng Xiaoping's foreign policy concept

The era characterised by Deng meant a turning-point compared to Mao's foreign policy. Mao's ideas were determined by the preparation for a third world war, while Deng brought this view to an end. „*We used to believe that war was inevitable and imminent. (...) In short, after analysing the general trends in the world and the environment around us, we have changed our view that the danger of war is imminent*”³. Deng based China's foreign policy on a new foundation and set a new main goal instead of simply surviving a world war and bringing communism to a global victory. This new goal was to regain China's role as a great power, which was lost more than a century ago in the Opium wars (1838-42, 1858-60). The desire to restore its role as a great power was not a new phenomenon in Chinese history. The reforms of the late imperial period, the May 4th movement, the aspiration of the Kuomintang (Guomindang) to reunite the country and even in the policy of the Sino-Soviet slip, the '*Great Leap Forward*' this aim was present. Paradoxically, it was its earlier enemy, the USA, which restored China's great power status to some extent. Nixon's foreign policy concept with keeping the national interests' of America in front of his eyes, provided a great power status for China – at least on the level of rhetoric.

As opposed to Mao, Deng had a more realistic view about the great power status of his country: „*People around the world are talking about the big triangle composed of the Soviet Union, the United States and China. We don't put it that way, because we have a sober estimate of our own strength*”⁴. Deng saw the ambiguous feature of China as a great power: „*China is a major country as well as a minor one. By major I mean that it has a huge population and a vast territory, and by minor I mean that it is still a relatively poor, developing country*”⁵. In his

² Memoranda of face-to-face conversation: *President Bush's Meeting with President Yang Shangkun of the People's Republic of China*, February 25, 1989. George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (GBPLM) http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-02-25-Shangkun%20.pdf. (14. 07. 2013)

³ DENG: *Speech at an enlarged meeting of the Military Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China*, June 4, 1985. Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (SWDX), 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1410.html> (16. 07. 2013).

⁴ DENG, *Speech at an enlarged meeting of the Military Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China*, June 4, 1985. SWDX ,3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1410.html> (16. 07. 2013).

⁵ DENG: *We Must follow Our Road in economic development as we did in revolution*, October, 26. 1984. SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1290.html> (16. 07. 2013)

opinion China could only turn into a great power through economic and technical development. Deng set the task in the following way: „*Modernization is at the core of all (...) major tasks, because it is the essential condition for solving both our domestic and our external problems. Everything depends on our doing the work in our own country well. The role we play in international affairs is determined by the extent of our economic growth. If our country becomes more developed and prosperous, we will be in a position to play a greater role in international affairs*”⁶. Deng knew that it would be a long way to China’s modernization (even 50-70 years⁷) and the help of the foreign states in the possession of developed technology would be necessary. The ‘*Reform and Opening up*’ policy proclaimed in 1978 demanded exactly this goal⁸. However, it demanded the international relations be based on new foundations. He gave up spreading the revolutionary ideologies typical of the Mao era and also deciding on foreign relations on ideological basis. Rather, China had to make practical and independent foreign policy: „*We adhere to an independent foreign policy of peace and do not join any bloc. We are prepared to maintain contacts and make friends with everyone*”⁹. This view determined its relationship with the USA and the USSR. Deng considered the relationship with the USA extremely important since it could be a long-term source of technology and capital. Still, he did not look at the USA as an ally. The Sino-Vietnamese War (1979) serves as an evidence of this because Deng informed the US about his intentions but acted independently¹⁰.

As opposed to the Mao era, China was trying to maintain a good relationship with every country, which still had a condition: none of the states had the right to interference into China’s domestic affairs. It was a very sensitive issue since according to China, its loss as a great power and its long-lasting domestic problems were related to the intervention of the west. With the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 China’s humiliation ended and was followed by nationalisation of foreign property and the fled of foreigners. However, fear for foreign intervention did not disappear, which heavily loaded the relationship with the USSR. Deng inherited this view: „*China will not play the card of another country and will not allow another country to play the China card, and we mean what we say*”¹¹. Deng was afraid that a foreign intervention would bring a political

⁶ DENG: *The present situation and the tasks before us*, January 16, 1980, SWDX, 2. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol2/text/b1390.html> (16. 07. 2013)

⁷ DENG: *We must safeguard world peace and ensure domestic development*, May 29, 1984., SWDX, 3. <http://web.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/c1200.html> (16. 07. 2013)

⁸ The generally accepted starting date of the „*Reform and Opening Up*” policy is third plenum of 11th Central Committee of the CCP, held in Beijing, from 18 December to 22 December 1978.

⁹ DENG: *For the great unity of the entire Chinese nation*, June 18, 1986, SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1530.html> (16. 07. 2013).

¹⁰ About this see the conversation of Deng and the James E. Carter in Washington, 29 January 1979. 205. Memorandum of Conversation in: NICKLES, David P. (eds): *Foreign Relations of the United States 1970-1980. China*. 13. United States Government Printing Office Washington, 2013.

¹¹ DENG: *Speech at an enlarged meeting of the Military Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China*, June 4, 1985. SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/>

turn, which would hinder the restoration of China's position as a great power. He found the western countries and the western democratic political structure extremely dangerous, that's why he announced that modernization is not equal with the westernisation of China: „*we cannot copy Western systems. If we did, that would only make a mess of everything. Our socialist construction can only be carried out under leadership, in an orderly way and in an environment of stability and unity. (...) Bourgeois liberalization would plunge the country into turmoil once more.*”¹² It is not surprising that according to Deng the most important principle in international relations was The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence¹³, whose fourth point says that states have to refrain from intervening into other countries domestic affairs¹⁴.

Last but not least, the foreign policy of Deng has another important feature, namely, he thought that his country did not have to give up active foreign policy despite its temporary weakness. In Deng's view China is the main representative of the Third World which can primarily play its role within the frame of the United Nations: „*It is one of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Its vote definitely represents the Third World, the underdeveloped countries. We have said more than once that China belongs to the Third World*”¹⁵. However, he emphasises that China's leading role is basically different from that of the US and USSR within their own block since it ensures its own position not by means of power and 'hegemony': „*China shall always belong to the Third World and shall never seek hegemony*”¹⁶, but rather by setting a good example and goals with responsibility: „*We are fair in our words and in our deeds. This adds to China's political influence. This policy has produced good results, and we shall follow it forever*”.¹⁷

To sum up, Deng's main aim was to restore his country's great power position. Accordingly, the foreign policy tasks were to ensure a peaceful international environment and to open up more widely but without any foreign intervention into domestic affairs. The basis of his active foreign policy was the representation of the Third World on the international stage. Still as we will see, the feasibility and reality of Deng's foreign policy concept largely depended on the ideas and foreign policy goals of the leadership of the USA.

vol3/text/c1410.html (16. 07. 2013).

¹² DENG: *Take a clear-cut stand against bourgeois liberalization*, December 30, 1986, SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1630.html> (16. 07. 2013).

¹³ See: VANG, Pobzeb: *Five Principles of Chinese Foreign Policies*, AuthorHouse, USA, 2008.

¹⁴ DENG: *The principles of peaceful coexistence have a potentially wide application*, October 31, 1984, SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1300.html> (16. 07. 2013).

¹⁵ DENG: *We Must follow Our Road in economic development as we did in revolution*, October, 26. 1984. SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1290.html> (16. 07. 2013).

¹⁶ DENG: *Realize the Four Modernizations and Never Seek Hegemony*, May 7, 1978. SWDX, 2. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol2/text/b1200.html> (16. 07. 2013).

¹⁷ DENG: *For the great unity of the entire Chinese nation*, June 18, 1986. SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1530.html> (16. 07. 2013).

Bush's Chinese visit in February: the period of harmonic co-operation

President Bush's dedication to Chinese relations was reflected by the fact that after taking up his post, he started planning his visit the Beijing immediately since he wanted to meet Deng before Mikhail Gorbachev's visit there. In his speech in Vladivostok Gorbachev had some generous gestures towards China (he made a promise to withdraw from Afghanistan, to de-militarise the shared border line and to suspend the support of Vietnam), which met the requirements China set in order to settle the relationship between the two sister parties¹⁸. From the view of US it seemed dangerous that the Soviet Union and China were getting closer to each other, that's why the Bush-government wanted to take steps as soon as possible. It was the funeral of the Japanese emperor Hirohito February 24, which gave the opportunity as the president of the US was present¹⁹. Bush arrived in Beijing the following day, where he was greeted with great respect, met the most important leaders such as Li Peng²⁰, Yang Shangkun²¹, Zhao Ziyang²² and Deng Xiaoping²³.

The Chinese leadership, realising the American worries, calmed Bush that irrespective of the results of the meetings, the Russian-Chinese alliance of the 1950s would not be restored. They promised to improve in the fields the Americans found arguable such as the foreign trade deficit, protection of intellectual properties and trading Chinese missiles²⁴. The Chinese leadership announced that getting closer to the US as well as to the USSR suits China's long-term strengthening in the field of the economy. According to the Chinese leaders

18 DENG: *Replies of the American TV Correspondent Mike Wallace*, September 2, 1986. SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1560.html> (16. 07. 2013).

19 U.S. Embassy Beijing Cable: *The President's Visit to China: Suggestions Regarding What We and the Chinese Hope to Accomplish*, February 6, 1989, IN: EVANS, Michael L. (eds.) *The U.S. „Tiananmen Papers” New Documents Reveal U.S. Perceptions of 1989 Chinese Political Crisis*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book. 47., 2001. EVANS (2001): <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB47/doc1.pdf>.

20 Memoranda of face-to-face conversation: *President Bush's Informal Tea with Premier Li Peng, of the State Council of the People's Republic of China*, February 25, 1985. Doc. Number: 8859 GBPLM http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-02-25--Peng.pdf. (18. 07. 2013) and: Memoranda of face-to-face conversation: *President Bush's Meeting with Premier Li Peng of the People's Republic of China*, February 26, 1989. Doc. Number: 8860 GBPLM http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-02-26--Peng.pdf (18. 07. 2013).

21 Memoranda of face-to-face conversation: *President Bush's Meeting with President Yang Shangkun of the People's Republic of China*, February 25, 1989. GBPLM [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-02-25--Shangkun%20\[1\].pdf](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-02-25--Shangkun%20[1].pdf) (18. 07. 2013).

22 Memoranda of face-to-face conversation: *President Bush's Meeting with General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party Zhao Ziyang of the People's Republic of China*, February 26, 1989. GBPLM http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-02-26--Ziyang.pdf

23 Memoranda of face-to-face conversation: *President Bush's Meeting with Deng Xiaoping of the People's Republic of China*, February 26, 1989. GBPLM http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1989-02-26--Xiaoping.pdf (18. 07. 2013).

24 U.S. Embassy Beijing Cable, *The President's Visit to China: Suggestions Regarding What We and the Chinese Hope to Accomplish*, February 6, 1989, IN: EVANS (2001): <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB47/doc1.pdf> (18. 07. 2013).

in order to achieve this, peaceful environment was needed and also the foreign states should refrain from interfering into their domestic affairs. Yang and Zhao cautiously warned the US not to make this mistake and not to interference into China's domestic issues. They also claimed that the 'Opening Up policy' did not mean copying the western political system²⁵.

The warning must be in connection with the case of Fang Lizhi. On 28th February Bush held a reception for his host at the Great Wall Sheraton Hotel with about 500 guests. The list was put together by the embassy, as a result of which ambassador Winston Lord, an ardent supporter of human rights, invited Fang, the astrophysical. He was considered as one of the most important member of the opposition since he openly shared his view on the western-type of political transition, because of which he was excluded from the CCP in 1987²⁶. The Chinese party opposed to Fang's invitation but the invitation cards had already been sent so the situation could not be resolved without the loss of face of one of the parties. In the end the Chinese authorities held Fang up and did not let him in the banquet. Because of the incident the Bush government expressed its dissatisfaction with Lord, which reflected the Americans' refrain from intervening into Chinese domestic affairs²⁷.

The Bush-meeting had importance from the Chinese leadership' view, because it created an opportunity to introduce the most important goals of their foreign policy to the new president. Due to the Fang Lizhi case the American government was willing to respect these. Basically, both parties were satisfied with the meeting and it served as the basis of harmonic co-operation in the future.

Tiananmen: violating the principles of Chinese foreign policy

However, the results of Bush's visit were soon undermined by the events on Square Tiananmen. Although they were not without any antecedents²⁸, the Americans did not expect it. The expert group with the task to deal with Asia was not formed yet, ambassador James R. Lilley following Lord in his position was to arrive on 2nd May, getting into the middle of the crisis²⁹. The American government did not know how to relate to the events, which is reflected by Bush's

²⁵ DENG: *China Will Tolerate No Disturbances*, March 4, 1989. SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1950.html> (16. 07. 2013).

²⁶ Deng about Fang Lizhi: „I have read Fang Lizhi's speeches. He doesn't sound like a Communist Party member at all. Why do we keep people like him in the Party? He should be expelled, not just persuaded to quit". DENG: *Take a clear-cut stand against bourgeois liberalization*, December 30, 1986, SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1630.html> (16. 07. 2013).

²⁷ About the Fang Lizhi case and it's consequences in the leadership of US foreign policy see: SEUTTINGER, Robert L.: *Beyond Tiananmen: the politics of U.S.-China relations, 1989-2000*. Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C., 2003. 25-27. SEUTTINGER (2003).

²⁸ U.S. Embassy Beijing: *Cable Farewell and Hail*, April 21, 1989 IN: EVANS (2001): <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB47/doc6.pdf> (18. 07. 2013).

²⁹ TYLER, Patric: *A great wall: six presidents and China: an investigate history*, PublicAffairs, New York, 2000. 343. (TYLER, 2000).

announcement on 21st May, one day after the marital law declaration. Bush said that he agreed with the goals of the students but they should reach them in a peaceful way. „*We do support freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press and clearly we support democracy. I don't want to be gratuitous in giving advice, but I would encourage restraint. I do not want to see bloodshed*”³⁰. Bush's statement reflects the fact that although they were prepared for the bad turn of the events, they tried to avoid any open criticism of the CCP as the American government did not want to put the two countries' good relationship at risk and Bush firmly believed that it was the strategic interest of America.

Still, Bush could not ignore the public opinion. The western television companies staying in Beijing due to Gorbachev's visit constantly broadcast the happenings, because of which the public followed the events with increasing interest. Bush's careful manoeuvring is also reflected by how he commented on the military intervention: „*It is clear that the Chinese Government has chosen to use force against Chinese citizens who were making a peaceful statement in favour of democracy. I deeply deplore the decision to use force against peaceful demonstrators and the consequent loss of life. We have been urging – and continue to urge – non-violence, restraint, and dialog. Tragically, another course has been chosen. Again, I urge a return to non-violent means for dealing with the current situation. The United States and People's Republic of China over the past two decades have built up through great efforts by both sides a constructive relationship beneficial to both countries. I hope that China will rapidly return to the path of political and economic reform and conditions of stability so that this relationship, so important to both our peoples, can continue its growth*”³¹. Bush's reserved behaviour was deeply condemned by the public, the Congress with its Democratic majority and even by a significant part of the Republican Party. The Congress demanded immediate sanctions against China, the freezing of military and technological transfers, blocking World Bank loan, imposing duties on Chinese products, suspending Peace Corp, as well as calling back the American ambassador³².

On 5th June giving in for the public opinion, Bush announced the first sanctions which mainly concerned the military field: military relations got suspended, the sale of military devices got blocked. Furthermore, Chinese students studying in the US were ensured about the immediate and automatic further validation of their right of abode. Humanitarian and medical help was promised to the ones who

³⁰ Public Paper: *The President's News Conference with President Mitterrand of France*, May 21, 1989. GBPLM [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=438&year=&month=\(18.07.2013\)](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=438&year=&month=(18.07.2013)).

³¹ Public Paper: *Statement on the Chinese Government's Suppression of student Demonstrations*, 06 03, 1989. GBPLM. [http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=492&year=&month=\(18.07.2013\)](http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=492&year=&month=(18.07.2013)).

³² About the public opinion and the opposition of the Congress see: ROSS, Robert S.: *The Bush Administration: The Origins of Engagement*, In: MYERS, Ramon, H., OKSENBURG Michel C. & SHAMBAUGH, David (ed): *Making China policy: lessons from the Bush and Clinton administrations*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, USA, 2001. 30-31 and SEUTTINGER, 2003. 66.

suffered from retaliation. Finally, he made a promise that the American China-policy would be thought over after a more exact understanding of the events³³.

The Bush administration took another important step: Fangh asked for diplomatic protection at the American embassy in Beijing on 5th June. Although he did not take part in the events on Square Tiananmen, he was likely to be arrested due to his earlier role. Rejecting his request would have undermined Bush's popularity even more so the government said yes, however for fear of the Chinese reaction, this was not widely aired to the media.

The Bush-government intended to calm down the public with some high-sounding but not to significant sanctions in the hope that it would not do considerable harm to the Chinese-American relations. Still, what was the response to the American manoeuvring in China? Neither the Congress nor the public was satisfied with Bush's balancing policy and it even turned the Chinese leadership against the US, as a result of which, the relationship with China was suddenly broken. As a first sign of this, Bush attempted to get through Deng several times but without success³⁴. Later, on 8th June the Chinese papers brought to light the case of Fang as a part of propaganda against the US³⁵. Welcoming Fang at the embassy was considered as a severe intervention into domestic affairs and clearly hinted at the idea that it was the USA that was in the background of the happening on the square. It was only on 26th June when an official answer in harsh tone arrived, which announced that China also suspended the military relations³⁶.

America received China's response with surprise. The Bush administration thought that the Chinese leadership would understand the sensitivity of the situation for the US government would appreciate Bush's role in trying to calm down the public³⁷. However, the Chinese looked at the attempt with different eyes. The introduction of the sanctions, welcoming Fang as well as the presence of the American media at Square Tiananmen suggested that the USA was intervening in Chinese domestic affairs, which meant one of the most sensitive issues of Chinese foreign policy. Unintentionally the Bush government reopened an old sore. How up-to-date the historic comparison was for the Chinese leaders is clearly reflected by

³³ Public paper: *The President's News Conference*, June 05, 1989. GBPLM http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=494&year=&month= (18. 07. 2013).

³⁴ Public Paper: *The President's News Conference*, June 08, 1989, GBPLM. http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=519&year=&month= (18. 07. 2013).

³⁵ About the critics of Chinese media see: KRISTOF, Nicholas D.: *Turmoil in China; China Seeks Arrest of Its Top Dissident*, The New York Times, June 12, 1989. <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/12/world/turmoil-in-china-china-seeks-arrest-of-its-top-dissident.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> (21. 07. 2013).

³⁶ Cable, From: U.S. Embassy Beijing, To: Department of State, Wash DC, TFCH01: SITREP N° 65, June 27. IN: RICHELSON, Jeffrey T. & EVANS, Michael L. (ed): *Tiananmen Square, 1989: The Declassified History*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book, 16., 1999. RICHELSON & EVANS (1999): <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB16/docs/doc33.pdf> (18. 07. 2013).

³⁷ About the special situation and the goals of the US government see the list prepared for the secret mission of the National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft and the Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger, 30 October 1989: State Department document: „Themes“, June 29, 1989. IN: RICHELSON & EVANS (1999): <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB16/docs/doc34.pdf> (18. 07. 2013).

Deng's words on the declaration, about the sanctions concerning the sale of arms and rethinking the World Bank loan which was accepted on the G7 Paris Summit (July 14-16, 1989)³⁸: „*I am a Chinese, and I am familiar with the history of foreign aggression against China. When I heard that the seven Western countries, at their summit meeting, had decided to impose sanctions on China, my immediate association was to 1900, when the allied forces of the eight powers invaded China.*”³⁹ On top of that, Deng thought that the western intervention in connection with Tiananmen was not an isolated case but it was a part of the series of events marking the shaking of the Communist Block. In his view, the western countries wanted to undermine the socialist world not with military means but with economic and political ones, including China, which had earlier been considered as a partner⁴⁰. So China could not be weak and had to resist any western intervention at any cost.⁴¹

However, Deng –as opposed to the conservative side of the CCP- did not want to put an end to the relationship with the west because in order to become a great power, China needed foreign technology and capital. So on 16th June, 1989 he announced before the members of the CCP: „*First, economic development should not slow down*”⁴² and to achieve this, the opening policy had to continue: „*We must really carry out reform and open to the outside – we can't do it with our doors closed*”⁴³. What was the task of China in this situation? Nothing else but to wait for the end of the western sanctions. So slowly but surely everything would get back to its own track. And to achieve it as soon as possible, western business people should be encouraged to invest in the country⁴⁴.

The American party realised fairly soon that international isolation was not in the interest of China, so they hoped that the relations would be restored soon. However, the Bush government was under pressure by the public opinion, so its attempts were not successful and were only enough to prevent deepening the crisis by vetoing the decisions of the Congress⁴⁵. Despite the attempts on both sides, restoring the relations

³⁸ Declaration on China, G-7 Summit, July 15, 1989., University of Toronto Library and the G8 Research Group at the University of Toronto. <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/1989paris/china.html> (11. 08. 2013).

³⁹ DENG: *We are Working to Revitalize the Chinese Nation*, April 7, 1990, SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/d1140.html> (16. 07. 2013).

⁴⁰ DENG: *We Are Confident That We Can Handle China's Affairs Well*, September 16, 1989. SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/d1040.html> (16. 07. 2013).

⁴¹ DENG: *With Stable Policies of Reform and Opening To the Outside World, China Can Have Great Hopes For the Future*, September 4, 1989. SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/d1020.html> (16. 07. 2013).

⁴² DENG: *Urgent Tasks of China's Third Generation of Collective Leadership*, June 16, 1989, SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/d1010.html> (16. 07. 2013).

⁴³ DENG: *With Stable Policies of Reform and Opening To the Outside World, China Can Have Great Hopes For the Future*, September 4, 1989. SWDX, 3. <http://web.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/d1020.html> (16. 07. 2013).

⁴⁴ DENG: *The United States Should Take the Initiative In Putting An End To the Strains In Sino-American Relations*, October 31, 1989. SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/d1060.html> (16. 07. 2013).

⁴⁵ TYLER (2000): 365-374 and SEUTTINGER (2003): 83-88., 93-111.

failed. However, the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq brought about a new situation which provided an opportunity for co-operation and easing tension.

The Gulf War: violation of another Chinese foreign policy principle

At the beginning of the crisis in Kuwait (July), it seemed that China and the US were capable of efficient co-operation within the framework of the UN. The two great powers agreed that the action of Iraq was illegal⁴⁶, violating international norms⁴⁷ and that Iraq must withdraw from Kuwait at once⁴⁸. They also shared the view on freezing import from Iraq and introducing arms embargo⁴⁹, as well as having a naval blockade⁵⁰ and international sanctions⁵¹.

Nevertheless, in August the disagreements between the two countries came to the surface again. China considered the invasion of Kuwait as a good opportunity to act as a great power, improving the international view on the country. Deng's statement clearly exemplifies how the Chinese leadership evaluated China's international importance: „*The situation in which the United States and the Soviet Union dominated all international affairs is changing. Nevertheless, in future when the world becomes three-polar, four-polar or five-polar, (...) In the so-called multi-polar world, China too will be a pole. We should not belittle our own importance*”⁵². China was considered an independent great power with its own zone of influence. The invasion of Kuwait was seen as a problem of the Third World and they wanted to act as a 'leader'. The aim was to solve the conflict at the table to show how enlightened methods they had in the field of diplomacy. They did it in the hope of the US and its western allies' lifting the sanctions against China. Besides, it would have conveyed an important message to the inner opposition of the Chinese government showing the international approval of the system.

The new foreign policy concept of the Bush government with its plan about world-wide international co-operation and the so-called New World Order⁵³ was absolutely against the Chinese plans. Although Bush and Deng had the same basic thought when evaluating the situation, i.e. the weakening of the USSR created a new international situation in which there was a chance for several power centres in order to take an active role in international politics. However, there was a basic difference, namely that Bush did not consider the US as one power centre but as

⁴⁶ United Nations Security Council resolution 662, adopted on 9 August 1990.

⁴⁷ United Nations Security Council resolution 664, adopted unanimously on 18 August 1990.

⁴⁸ United Nations Security Council resolution 660, adopted on 2 August 1990.

⁴⁹ United Nations Security Council resolution 661, adopted on 6 August 1990.

⁵⁰ United Nations Security Council resolution 664, adopted on 18 August 1990.

⁵¹ United Nations Security Council resolution 669, adopted on 24 September 1990.

⁵² DENG: *The international situation and economic problem*, March 3, 1990. SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/d1130.html> (16. 07. 2013).

⁵³ *Public Paper: Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Cessation of the Persian Gulf Conflict* March 6 1991, GBPLM. http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2767&year=1991&month=3 (18. 07. 2013).

the *only* superpower above all the others, whose power did not come from strength and the principle of *divide et imperia*, but from the wise co-ordination of the states' interest and their leading. As the best possible way of creating the New World Order, the Bush government decided to organise a military coalition in which all the great powers would act together including the weakened USSR as well as China and the western powers under American direction.

Both the American New World Order and the military solution of the crisis in Kuwait were opposed by the Chinese leadership from the beginning. As China saw it, the New World Order was nothing else but the US guarding the other great powers, which would undermine China's role in the Third World, which was the cornerstone of the foreign policy laid by Deng. On the one hand, the military intervention would make it impossible for China to play the mediator roll, which was thought to help China break out of its international isolation. On the other hand, the military solution was rejected because of its foreign intervention nature, which was not surprising with Tiananmen in their mind.

There were several occasions in November to bring the opposing views closer to each other but the parties talked at cross purposes. The American plan⁵⁴ set a date (January 15, 1991) for the withdrawal of the Iraqi troops from Kuwait, after which the international community could take even military action. The leadership of the USA hoped that China would say yes to this plan so the Chinese Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, was invited to Washington on 30th November, which was welcomed by the Chinese. Qian announced his visit to Washington on 26th November and also said that it was unrealistic to hope for China's acceptance of the military intervention. On the very same the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC was informed by the American party, that Qian could meet the President on condition that China would back the American plan. The Chinese leadership considered this blackmail so they also set new conditions. As long as Qian would not be invited by the Americans, China would use its right of veto in the UN⁵⁵. Finally, it did not happen because when it came to voting on 29th November⁵⁶, China decided to abstain, which Bush considered betrayal. Despite this, Bush met Qian on 30th November but no significant step was taken to put the relations right⁵⁷.

After accepting the United Nations Security Council resolution 678, the organisation of the international coalition began and military forces appeared. The American army of half a million soldiers, the technology and the failure of the Chinese diplomacy to take an active role in bringing the UN and Iraq closer to each

⁵⁴ BUSH, George: *National Security Directive 54, Responding to Iraqi Aggression in the Gulf*, January 15, 1991. IN: BURR, William & RICHELSON, Jeffrey T. (ed.): *Operation Desert Storm: Ten Years Later National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book 39*. 2001. (BURR, & RICHELSON, 2001) <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB39/document4.pdf> (11. 08. 2013).

⁵⁵ SEUTTINGER (2003): 113-114.

⁵⁶ United Nations Security Council resolution 678, adopted on 29 November 1990.

⁵⁷ About this see: Memoranda of face-to-face conversation: *Meeting with People's Republic of China Foreign Minister Qian Qichen*, November 30, 1990. GBPLM. November 30, 1990. GBPLM http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1990-11-30--Qichen.pdf (18. 07. 2013).

other, made Deng – who was still very influential but had already stepped down – realise in December the hopes of China for the resolution of the conflict in Kuwait were not realistic: „Some developing countries would like China to become the leader of the Third World. But we absolutely cannot do that - this is one of our basic state policies. We can't afford to do it and besides, we aren't strong enough”⁵⁸. Deng's view, however, was not shared by leadership of the CCP who still believed in the possibility of negotiations as in the meantime Russia had re-evaluated the situation in Iraq due to the lining up of UN forces near its border. The Chinese leadership still believed that even if it could not prevent a military solution, the US would find itself in a prolonging war like in Vietnam. In this case the US would have needed the help of China, which could have ensured the end of the arms embargo and the restoration of its role as a great power⁵⁹.

However, the Operation Desert Storm lasted only 43 days despite the expectations of Chinese leadership (17 January 1991 – 28 February 1991). The Chinese public followed the events with intense interest⁶⁰ as in the first high-tech war in the world the US and its allies annihilated the Iraqi army. However, most of the weaponry of the annihilated Iraqi army was from China, as it had been the most important arms supplier of Iraq since the Iraqi-Iranian War (1980-1988)⁶¹. The vantage of the American military technique shocked the Chinese leadership and made it obvious that its plans about taking part in politics as a great power were mere illusion. Deng's recognition that China was unable to fulfil the role of being the leader of the Third World was proved. Although the country could not be ignored, its weight could not be compared to the only superpower of the world, the US. That's why it became unavoidable to re-evaluate the doctrine determining the foreign policy of the 1980s.

Collapse of the co-operation and the „low profile” Chinese foreign policy

As a result of the failure in co-operation of the Iraq case and the lack of improvement in other fields – human rights, missiles sales to Syria and Pakistan, the violation of intellectual property rights, American trade deficit – Bush re-evaluated his former China-supporting policy. This was a significant change. Bush, the “old

⁵⁸ DENG: *Seize the opportunity to develop the economy*, December 24, 1990, SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/d1170.html> (16. 07. 2013).

⁵⁹ SEUTTINGER (2003): 112.

⁶⁰ About this see: BENJAMIN, Robert: *Beijing Neutral but many Chinese Applaud Gulf War*, In: The Baltimore Sun, February, 12. 1991. http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1991-02-12/news/1991043071_1_gulf-war-chinese-china (10. 08. 2013), or HOLLEY, David: *Chinese Fascinated by Gulf War, Strongly Back U.S.: Reaction: The Government Maintains a Neutral Stance: But Some in Beijing Say Bush Should Get Tougher*. IN: The Los Angeles Times, 19 February, 1991. http://articles.latimes.com/1991-02-19/news/mn-1525_1_gulf-war (03. 07. 2013).

⁶¹ Defense Intelligence Agency, Intelligence Information Report, *PLA Modernizes Its Military Training Program*, June 23, 1995. In: BURR, & RICHELSON, 2001 <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB39/document13.pdf> (11. 08. 2013) and about the Chinese-made military weaponry in Iraq see: International Institute for Strategic Studies: *The Military Balance 1990–1991*, Brassey's, London, 1990.

friend' of China, gave up China, which determined the relations of the two country in the rest of his presidency. However Bush vetoed the proposal of the Congress and Senate not to renew the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status of China (with also considering the economic interests of the US), in September 1992 he announced to sell 150 F-16 fighters to Taiwan⁶², which according to the Chinese view was the most sensitive interference in Chinese domestic issues. The trust between the two countries had reached the lowest level since the normalization of 1972.

As an answer to the Gulf War and the fell of the communist countries thoughtful Eastern-Europe the leadership of the CCP decided to return to isolation and give up the 'Opening up policy'. This resulted in a slowing down of economic growth and an increasing budget deficit. Similar to the early Mao-era the Western countries and especially the USA became an enemy and a possible military conflict came again into consideration. On the contrary Deng by the end of 1991 unsuccessfully tried to call attention⁶³ to this mistake of the leadership. He worried that the isolation and slower growing rate could make it impossible to restore China's position as a great power. He set off on his so-called southern tour (*nanxun*) in 1992, during which he visited the special economic zones considered as the symbols of his economic policy. In his speech⁶⁴ Deng defended the '*Opening Up policy*', suggesting that economic growth had utmost priority. Deng knew that maintaining the opening policy would increase the possibility of conflicts between China and the Western World, especially the US. Against the continuous interference into China's domestic issues China would have not afford to cut the relations as the US was a primary important technology and capital exporter. Deng drew the attention of the CCP to the importance of not to seek direct conflicts, but also not to be afraid of them. He gave up his view of China being the leader of the Third World and the active foreign policy, because he realised that the hegemony of the US spreads over even to the Third World. This was the introduction of the so called „*low profile*” Chinese foreign policy, which was summarized with twenty-four Chinese character: *Leng Jing Guan Cha, Zhan Wen Jiao Gen, Chen Zhuo Ying Fu, Tao Guang Yang Hui, Shan Yu Shou Zhuo, Jue Bu Dang Tou* – „*Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership*”⁶⁵ The „*low profile*” strategy means that China will not take the lead in the international society and will not take part in a serious conflict, which would endanger the

⁶² Public paper: *Remarks to General Dynamics Employees I Forth Worth, Texas*, September 2, 1992. GBPLM. http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=4747&year=1992&month=9 (10. 08. 2013).

⁶³ DENG: *Remarks made during an inspection tour of Shanghai*, January 28 – February 18, 1991. SWDX, 3. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/d1180.html> (16. 07. 2013).

⁶⁴ DENG: *Experts from talks given in Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shanghai*, January 18 – February 21, 1992. SWDX, 3 <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/d1200.html> (16. 07. 2013).

⁶⁵ HSIN, Chih Chen: *Soft Way to Consolidate Hard Power: China's New 'Low Profile' Strategy Orientation*, *Journal of Defence Studies*, 4-5. 2011.

economic grow. This new foreign policy seemed to be dropping the goals which were laid down in the 1980's, but in the long run the idea of China being a rule-maker at international level did not have to be disregarded, simply the right time had not come yet.

Deng's evaluation of the foreign situation and his ideas were not accepted immediately by the highest leadership of the CCP. The Fourteen National Congress of the CCP held in 12-18 October 1992 meant the defeat of the conservative wing of the Party and the return of Deng as a paramount leader. The revised foreign concept of Deng, with simultaneously cooperation and sporadic conflicts, characterizes the Sino-US relationship still in our days.

Summary

At the beginning of the Bush era it seemed that the US and China would deepen their partner relationship even more. The foreign policy constructed by Kissinger and Nixon attributed a bigger role to East-Asian countries than their real potentials suggested. Under these circumstances, the paramount leader of the CCP Deng Xiaoping set the most important foreign policy goals. Shaking of the Communist Block caused changes in international politics, which forced the leadership of the US to found its foreign policy on a new basis. Bush's New World Order concept violated many of the principles laid down by Deng and China also lost its earlier distinguished status. The Chinese leadership was only able to adopt the new situation through shock, which did not mean giving up the original ideas but simply realising that the time for implementing their original ideas had not come yet. The success of China's adaptation has been proved by the economic growth of the next decades and its join into some global institutions.